

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3412

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: INDIAN ADMIRATION FOR US POLITICAL SYSTEM SOARS

REF: NEW DELHI 10676

1. WE HAVE BEEN STRUCK WITH HOW IMPRESSIVE OUR RECENT NATIONAL POLITICAL UPHEAVAL AND IN PARTICULAR OUR CHANGE IN COMMAND HAVE SEEMED IN INDIAN EYES. IN ALL PARTS OF INDIA, WHERE GUSHING PRAISE FOR THE US IS INFREQUENT, IT HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT THAT AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE WE STILL SEEM TO BE RECOGNIZED AS THE LIVING REPOSITORY OF DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS.

2. THE EMBASSY AND ALL THREE CONSULATES HAVE NOTED THIS REACTION IN VIRTUALLY EVERY OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE CONVERSATION WE HAVE HAD IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS. EVEN THE RADICAL LEFT HAS ACKNOWLEDGED WITH ADMIRATION THE BASIC SOUNDNESS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. PERHAPS THE MOST STARTLING EXAMPLE WAS THE FRONT-PAGE STORY BY KARANJIA IN THE INVARIABLY ANTI-AMERICAN WEEKLY BLITZ LAST WEEK WHICH PROCLAIMED: QUOTE: THIS IS AMERICA'S FINEST HOUR. NEVER BEFORE HAVE THE IDEALS OF FREEDOM AND

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DEMOCRACY EMERGED MORE TRIUMPHANT THAN THEY HAVE FROM THE

TRIAL AND TORMENT OF WATERGATE.....IT TRULY PROJECTS THE AGONY AS WELL AS GLORY OF THE FREE LAND AND DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.....THE WHOLE WORLD OWES THIS LAND AND PEOPLE A SOLEMN HOMAGE.....TO THE GOOD AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THEIR FREE INSTITUTIONS, LIKE PUBLIC POLLS, THE PRESS, THE RADIO AND TV, FOR THE POWER AND MAJESTY WITH WHICH THEY DEMONSTRATED THAT VOX POPULI CAN BE, AND INDEED IS, VOX DEI. END QUOTE.

3. KARNAJIA SOUNDED OUT CONSUL GENERAL BANE THIS WEEK AND PROUDLY CALLED ATTENTION TO HIS ARTICLE AND HOPED WE THOUGHT WELL OF IT. EVEN THE BENGALI-VERNACULAR PRESS AND THE CPI(M) HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH UNACCUSTOMED PRIASE. WHILE THE OFFICIAL ORGANS OF THE CPI HAVE BEEN A MARKED EXCEPTION TO THIS PATTERN, SOME INDIVIDUAL COMMUNIST LEADERS LIKE THE ADDITIONAL ADVOCATE GENERAL OF KERALA HAVE PRIVATELY VOLUNTEERED TO US OFFICERS THEIR ADMIRATION FOR THE VITALITY OF US DEMOCRACY AND COMMENTED THEY WERE BEING FORCED TO REVISE THEIR PAST NOTIONS ABOUT DEMOCRACY IN A "MONOPOLISTIC," "CAPITALISTIC" SOCIETY.

4. THE MESSAGE WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE ALMOST STUNNED ALL IS THIS ONE: THAT NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL, HOW COMPETENT, HOW APPARENTLY SUCCESSFUL HE SEEMED TO BE, PRESIDENT NIXON IN THE END RESIGNED BECAUSE PUBLIC PRESSURE, AS GENERATED AND EXERCISED THROUGH THE PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES IN WASHINGTON, HAD FORCED HIM TO ADDRESS THE SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST HIM; AND THAT NOWHERE ALONG THE LINE COULD THE JUDICIARY, THE PROSECUTION OR THE PRESS BE "BOUGHT OFF." PEOPLE HERE KNOW THAT THIS IS THE WAY A DEMOCRACY IS SUPPOSED TO WORK, BUT HAVE BECOME JADED BY THE ABUSES OF POWER FOR PERSONAL GAIN WHICH HAVE BECOME AN ACCEPTED PART OF THE INDIAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL GAME. THEIR REACTION IS GENUINE ASTONISHMENT AND ADMIRATION, GENERALLY GLOOMY COMPARISON OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE WITH THAT OF THE US, AND A VIRTUALLY UNIVERSAL OBSERVATION THAT THE IMAGE OF THE US POLITICAL HAS NEVER BEEN HIGHER. (THIS SAME REACTION, INCIDENTALLY, CHARACTERIZES THE COMMENTS OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS IN NEW DELHI AS WELL.)

5. ALL OF THIS EUPHORIA DOES NOT LESSEN THE PERSISTEN WIL-
LINGNESS OF INDIANS TO CRITICIZE US POLICY; BUT IT DOES UNDER-
LINE THE CURIOUS AMBIVALENCE OF INDIANS ABOUT THE US IN WHICH
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THE UNENDING LINES FOR VISAS, THE THIRST FOR AMERICAN MOVIES, BOOKS AND MATERIAL PRODUCTS, AND THE ENVY OF US POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND FREEDOMS CONTINUOUSLY CONTRAST WITH SUSPICION THAT US ECONOMIC AND MILITARY POWER MAY BE USED TO HURT OR IMPAIR INDIAN INTERESTS IN THE SUBCONTINENT OR NEIGHBORING AREAS.
MOYNIHAN

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